



Happy holidays and a bright New Year

Herald Union



Vol. XII, No. 6

Serving the military communities of the 104th Area Support Group

Dec. 21, 2004

Inside this issue



Feedback

"I hope to PCS to the United States, retire, transition to civilian life and settle down finally," said Baumholder's Sgt. 1st Class Abid Shah in this week's reader survey on hopes for the new year. See page 2 for more responses.

Photo by LeAnne MacAllister



Photo by David Ruderman

Band of Brothers tour Germany

World War II veterans who inspired the book and movies share stories about their wartime experiences with today's Soldiers during a visit to Hanau's Fliegerhorst Fitness Center. See page 4.

Santa sightings
Tree lightings, holiday concerts and more help mark the season. See stories and photos throughout this issue.



Photo by Midori VanBrunt



Photo by Karl Weisel

Warrior Focus on Afghanistan

Military Police take over the Hohenfels Training Area to train with Military Intelligence Soldiers and prepare for deployment to Afghanistan next spring.



Photo by Karl Weisel

Holiday season in full swing

Visitors sip hot apple wine, sample holiday treats and shop for ornaments at the Frankfurt Christmas Market on the Römer. The Frankfurt market, like many of the larger markets in the area, stays open until shortly before Christmas. Shoppers can still sample the traditional German happenings at markets in Hanau, Mainz and Wiesbaden.

Making families feel welcome

Hessen minister president throws holiday bash for Americans

By Karl Weisel

104th Area Support Group Public Affairs Office

"Sorry, I couldn't get back to you last Friday — I was busy having tea with the minister president at the palace."

That's what nearly 100 Soldiers and family members stationed in Hessen were able to say after enjoying a holiday

get-together hosted by Hessen Minister President Roland Koch and his wife, Anke, Dec. 3 at Wiesbaden's Schloss Biebrich.

"This is the place where we invite all of our state guests," said Koch during welcoming remarks to assembled U.S. Soldiers and their families in one of the lofty halls of the Rhein River palace. "I hope that we can continue to do this for a long time with American troops and their families in the state of Hessen."

As he has done in the past several years, Hessen's senior government official invited American military families stationed in the state of Hessen for a holiday celebration to show solidarity with those serving far from home and to make Americans feel welcome in the German state. Citing the millions of Americans who have at one time or another called Hessen home, Koch said, "I hope that you can feel it in your daily lives — that the citizens of Hessen enjoy living together with you."

"I'm very happy once again to have the opportunity to welcome families of Hessen-based forces to this event around the time of Christmas."

Koch said he was especially pleased to share the occasion with American families this year after so many Soldiers had returned from serving under dangerous circumstances in Iraq.

Americans were treated to holiday carols sung by students from the Rheingauschule Geisenheim, a visit by St. Nikolaus and his angel companion, coffee, tea and cake.

See Holiday bash on page 4



Photo by Karl Weisel

Hanau youth Timothy Coleman accepts gifts from St. Nikolaus and his angel sidekick during the Hessen minister president's Advent tea at Wiesbaden's Schloss Biebrich for American families Dec. 3.

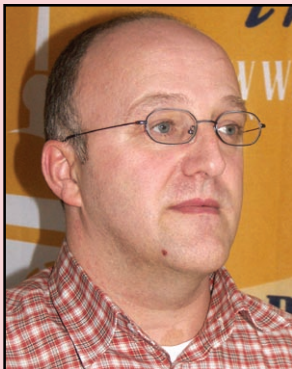
Commentary

Feedback: *What are your hopes for the new year?*



1st Lt. Kurt Muniz
Headquarters and Headquarters Company,
1-37th Armor, Friedberg

"To be as ready as possible because there is a real chance for another deployment next year. I hope to be prepared for any mission. I also hope that I can marry my girlfriend next year."



Randy A. McNally
Giessen Education Center

"I hope that everybody has a safe year. At work my goal is to offer as many classes as possible next year. Currently we are working around the deployment schedules to make sure Soldiers will be able to work on their education. This way they feel that they have accomplished something though there is so much chaos. Furthermore I hope that my family remains healthy."



Spc. Kyle Dignan
Company A,
1-129th MP (Provisional) Company, Hanau

"To leave Germany early in the new year and get back home, back to the farm, back to a full-time job and to my fiancée ... and to start school in the fall. That's my big hope."



Mark Wojcik
President of the Baumholder Community
Spouses Club

"Compassion, understanding and a little more cultural tolerance would be nice."



Patty Sanchez
Friedberg Education Center

"As a counselor I hope that many Soldiers think more about their education, because it brings them further in their career. And I also hope I get to finish my education as well. Another hope is that I get to be together with my husband very soon. He already moved to Fort Knox, Ky."

Top brass salute Soldiers

**By Gen. Peter Schoomaker and
Dr. Francis J. Harvey**
*Chief of staff of the Army and secretary of
the Army*

During this holiday season we honor our Soldiers for the sacrifices they make while serving our great nation at home and throughout the world.

For more than two centuries America's Soldiers have preserved liberty for its citizens and our nation's friends. The Army has a long, proud history that predates the republic. From the battlefields of Lexington and Bunker Hill to Shiloh and Bastogne, to Baghdad and beyond, American Soldiers have stood firm against those who would deny basic human dignity to those less fortunate.

American Soldiers today display unrelenting tenacity, steadfast purpose, confidence and heroism on a daily basis, just as they have for over 229 years. No matter the place or time, our Soldiers remain the centerpiece of the Army, its indispensable heart and soul. As Gen. Creighton Abrams noted

three decades ago: "People are not in the Army; they are the Army." It was true then, it is true today and it will remain true tomorrow.

Generations of young men and women have joined the ranks of America's armed forces. Heirs to a sacred and noble legacy, the belief that freedom is not free, they answer the call to arms and serve the nation with courage and commitment, adding glory to the shining tradition of the American Soldier.

Soldiers are warriors of character, reflecting the values of the American people while serving the greatest nation on earth. We pay tribute today to all the American men and women who have served so faithfully during our nation's times of danger. Through your sacrifices you make possible for millions of your fellow citizens the freedom, democracy and unmatched opportunity that we all enjoy in the United States today.

May each of you have a safe holiday season. God bless each of you and your families, God bless our Army and God bless the United States of America.

Letter to the editor

To the editor,

I received a letter informing me the Keller Theater's Pub was being contracted out against the theater's wishes and without their prior knowledge. The Keller Theater and Pub is a part of the 284th Base Support Battalion, which has decided that an "adult bar" needs to be available to the community in Giessen. Their argument is that adults, particularly teachers, are in need of a bar to call their own.

First of all, we live in Germany — you can't go one block without there being a pub. Second of all, the Keller has a bar. Instead of stealing it and contracting it out, why not advertise the pub that already exists?

The Keller Theater and Pub is an amazing and largely unsung resource for the 284th BSB, now in great danger of being destroyed. They may argue that the Keller isn't making enough money and that the pub isn't open enough. They don't mention that it is because of their restrictions and limitations that the Keller isn't thriving as it once did.

The Keller Theater and Pub is known throughout U.S. Army Europe as one of the top English-language theaters around — but is virtually unheard of within its own BSB.

All the theater's performers and technicians are also volunteers who come from every culture — what a great way of joining with our German neighbors and engaging in much needed cultural friendship.

It is rumored that the Alpine Club in Giessen is going to take the contract. Does the 284th BSB community really need another Italian restaurant?

How dare the 284th BSB take something without asking? How dare they underhandedly pull the pub out from under the Keller's feet? Whatever happened to informed consent? It took an anonymous letter from a BSB employee to get the word out.

It is a shame and I hope that the people of this community will be as angered as I am.

Kathleen Phipps
1st Brigade

Editor's note: The 284th BSB Morale Welfare and Recreation Division responds:

The 284th Base Support Battalion is always looking for ways to improve its service to the community. As good stewards of limited resources, the 284th BSB is responsible for ensuring that all facilities are managed and operated in accordance with Army standards. The leadership of the 284th BSB has the responsibility to examine the overall financial situation of the Keller Pub and create the conditions to ensure it has the opportunity to earn a profit. There has been no final decision made on the future of the Keller Pub. The 284th BSB will examine all options and make the best decision on the future of the pub, knowing full well that the Keller Pub and the Keller Theater are contributing partners in the Friedberg and Giessen community.

Herald Union

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Commander 104th Area Support Group

Col. Herman "Tracy" Williams III

104th ASG Command Sergeant Major

CSM Jose A. Fontanez

104th ASG Public Affairs Officer

Raino Schareck

Newspaper staff

Editor.....Karl Weisel
Associate Editor.....David Ruderman
221st BSB Reporter.....Cassandra Kardeke (mil 337-5772)
222nd BSB Reporter.....Ignacio Rubalcava (mil 485-6191)
284th BSB Reporter.....Alexandra Williams (mil 343-6597)
414th BSB Reporter.....Vacant (mil 322-1600)

Address: 104th ASG, Herald Union, Unit 20193 Box 0001, APO AE 09165-0001; or, Herald Union, Yorkhof Kaserne, Bldg. 1205, Chemnitz Str. 2-4, 63452 Hanau.
Telephone: mil 323-3257, civ (06181) 180-3257. Fax: civ (06181) 14029.
Email: hesherald@104asgexch.hanau.army.mil.
Home page: www.104thasg.hanau.army.mil.

News and features



Photo by Karl Weisel

William "Wild Bill" Guarnere (from left), Edward "Babe" Heffron, Buck Compton, Earl McClung, Darrell "Shifty" Powers and Don Malarkey — the men who inspired the "Band of Brothers" book and movie series — describe what battling the enemy and the weather was like during World War II. The six veterans met with Soldiers and family members Dec. 15 in Hanau.

WWII veterans swap war stories

Men who inspired 'Band of Brothers' share experience with today's Soldiers

By David Ruderman

104th Area Support Group Public Affairs Office

Six surviving members of Company E, 2nd Battalion, 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division, made famous by the Stephen Ambrose history and subsequent HBO film "Band of Brothers," elicited roars of laughter, nods of agreement and knowing winks from about 400 Soldiers when they appeared at Hanau's Fliegerhorst Fitness Center Dec. 15.

"What our forefathers did in World War II, what we did in Iraq probably pales compared with that," said Col. Dyfied Harris, 4th Brigade commander, as he introduced the six octogenarians to a full house.

"I'd rather be here than be back home," said William "Wild Bill" Guarnere. "My brother served with the 1st Armored Division. When I see you all I see my brother."

Guarnere's brother, a medic during the war, died in combat in Italy, explained fellow Easy Company survivor, Edward "Babe" Heffron.

"We feel very humble and very proud to be in your presence," said Heffron. "I feel almost embarrassed wearing my jacket and cap" — presents from the 1st AD that ferried the vets for their visit to Germany, which included meeting Soldiers and family members, signing autographs at the Hanau BookMark, visiting Bastogne where they helped push back the Germans at the Battle of the Bulge and dinner with surviving Wehrmacht veterans.

"We fought in a different war, and in my humble opinion the enemy you are fighting

today is a greater threat to the whole world and civilization than those we fought. Our hats are off to you."

"We're about all that's left," said Earl McClung, referring to the six. "There may be another five or so still around. It's an honor for me to look at your young faces and remember what used to be. We support you guys all the way. Thank you very much."

"We know the country's in good hands with you there to protect them," said Darrell "Shifty" Powers. "We love every one of you and wish you all a merry, merry Christmas."

"We are proud of what you are doing for the United States of America, like what we did in World War II," said Don Malarkey, describing the comrades he has known for over half a century as men with "hearts of gold and faces that only a mother could love."

"We're awfully proud and flattered that you would ask us to come over here," said Powers.

One Soldier asked the vets about their experiences right after the war.

"The first thing I did was get that broad I met when she was 13 years old, and we got married right away," said Guarnere to roars of laughter. "Without the wives, we would not be here either," he said.

Powers responded to a question about the experience of parachuting into enemy fire during the invasion of Normandy. "We thought, man, we know it all, we're ready for this. When we got over France, we found out we didn't know that much. ... At the time you could hear the shrapnel and bullets coming through the plane. It was a scary time, but we were anxious to get out of the plane because a plane is a big target."

What can families and mothers in particular do to support Soldiers in Iraq, asked one mother with a son presently deployed there?

"There's nothing you can do," said McClung. "The mothers are the ones that really get hurt in this — the mothers and the wives and the children."

The vets agreed that Bastogne, stopping the German army offensive and surviving being cut off from other Allied forces during frighteningly cold weather in the winter of 1944, was probably the worst of their wartime experiences.

"Bastogne — you'd freeze your cards off," said Guarnere.

"I thought Holland was bad — we went 78 days without a bath — but Bastogne, it was bad," said Heffron. "The weather was the greatest hardship, the cold and the wind ... they don't tell you about that."

"That was a miserable, miserable time," said McClung.

"You do what you had to do," said Heffron. "You people, you make the country what it is. Believe me, the whole city of Philadelphia, that I know, loves you guys. We can't say enough about you."

The admiration in the audience was no less sincere than that of the veterans for the Soldiers present.

"I think the men of Easy Company are the true heroes of this whole century," said Spc. Jose Masiclat, of Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 1-1st Cavalry.

"Before I came I didn't know anything about them," said Pfc. Kyle Hawkins, also of HHT, 1-1st Cav. "I learned a lot and I have tremendous respect for what they did and how they're still out here today."

"I wish I could have gotten their autographs," said Spc. Isaac Arenas, also of HHT, 1-1st Cav.

News flash

Next issue Jan. 18

The *Herald Union* staff takes a break during the holiday period to prepare entries for the annual Keith L. Ware Army journalism competition and catch up on administrative requirements. The next edition will be published Jan. 18, 2005. Items for that issue should be submitted no later than Jan. 7.

ACAP update

All Army Career and Alumni Program clients must now have an Army Knowledge Online account and password to use any automated systems, including the automated pre-separation counseling. ACAP will host a series of veterans benefits briefings in January. Department of Veterans Affairs representatives will conduct the briefings from 9-11:30 a.m. Jan. 18 in Hanau, Jan. 20 in Wiesbaden, Jan. 21 in Giessen and Jan. 26 in Baumholder. Call Hanau ACAP at mil 322-8308, Baumholder ACAP at mil 485-6330, Giessen ACAP at mil 343-9332 or Wiesbaden ACAP at mil 337-5709 for details and to enroll.

Dining facility champs

Congratulations to Büdingen's 1-1st Cavalry and Baumholder's 2nd Brigade dining facilities — winners of the 1st Armored Division's Thanksgiving meal dining facility competition Nov. 25.

AFN decoder problems

For Soldiers, family members and Department of Defense civilians living off-post, the American Forces Network decoder provides access to television programming on AFN; however, even with a decoder there may be times channels may be missing. When this happens viewers can log on to their computers to www.afneurope.net or www.myafn.net to get help. AFN Europe staff offer the following instructions to help viewers ensure they receive all of the channels: * Select "Menu" on the remote, then "Receiver status," then "User Setup," then "Network presets" and scroll to "Use NIT." * Press the "Select" button to make the "Yes" selection. * Exit out of the menu and when asked to save changes, do so. For more information or assistance call the AFN Europe Network Operations Center at mil 389-4444 or civ (0621) 460 85444. (USAREUR Public Affairs)



Sex harassment training

Training in the Prevention of Sexual Harassment will be offered in German Dec. 29 at 10 a.m. in Building 1205, Room 401, on Hanau's Yorkhof Kaserne. Call Irene Thoene at mil 323-2431 for details.

Tree for the Troops

Post or read holiday greetings from around the world on the fourth annual Tree for the Troops website. Visit www.treeforthetroops.com.

News and features

Tanker shrugs off Silver Star fuss

By Spc. Rebecca Burt
V Corps Public Affairs Office

When Spc. Micheaux Sanders joined the Army, all he was looking for was a better start in life, but circumstances and bravery earned him a Silver Star while fighting in Iraq.

All the to-do about the commendation for valor felt odd, said the 20-year-old North Carolinian, who was pinned with the medal during the 1st Armored Division Welcome Home Ceremony in Wiesbaden in October. "The medal's cool, but all the fuss feels weird. I'm in the Army. This is my job," said the 2-37th Armor tanker stationed in Friedberg.

Fresh from basic training, Sanders deployed to Iraq in 2003, sure of his training, dedicated to his mission and committed to being a team player, he said. He was ready when an afternoon mission to aid an infantry patrol quickly turned into a life or death situation for him and his tank mates.

His tank crew and two others from the 2-37th were called to the aid of a 1st Cavalry Regiment patrol trapped in an insurgent ambush. As they rolled onto the scene, they knew they might be in a serious situation, said Sanders.

"There were blown up Humvees all over, and the infantry guys looked trapped in this one building. I remember thinking, 'What the hell?' and double-checking my helmet and body armor," he said.

The insurgents opened fire on the trio of M1-A1 Abrams tanks.

"They were throwing everything at us. They were shooting AK-47s, rocket propelled grenades, pistols and shotguns and throwing grenades," said Sanders.

The tankers fired back, but because the unit had been scheduled to move, the tanks had been prepared for transport and were carrying a minimum of ammunition. The sudden change in mission and unexpected ferocity of the insurgents' attack left Sanders and his fellow Soldiers in dire straits.

"We didn't have much to start with when we rolled out. We had four drums of .762 machine-gun ammo; 200 rounds of .50-cal. ammo; two magazines of M-16 rifle ammo, and 30 rounds of 9 mm pistol ammo," he said.

Sanders stood exposed to enemy fire in one of the tank's hatches, firing whatever he or his fellow crewmembers could find. A round struck him in the arm, slicing straight through his shoulder and out the other side, but he barely noticed, waving off the medics who tried to come to his aid.

"I didn't even know I was shot until they told me," said

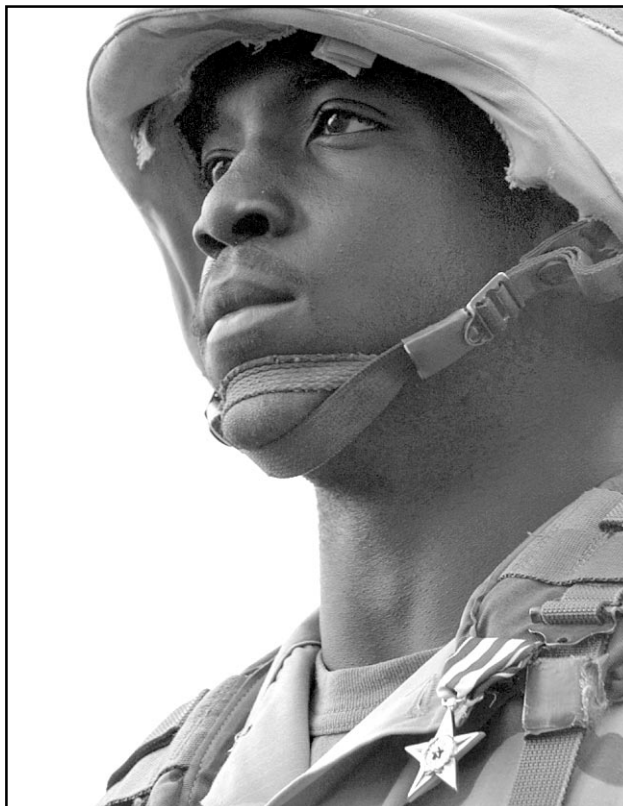


Photo courtesy of 1st AD Public Affairs
Spc. Micheaux Sanders of V Corps' Company C, 2nd Battalion, 37th Armor Regiment, 1st Armored Division, stands in formation after receiving the Silver Star during a Welcome Home Ceremony in Wiesbaden Oct. 7.

Sanders. "While I was fighting it was bleeding, but I told the doctors to leave me alone. I was busy."

When the bullets ran out, Sanders kept fighting.

"I threw whatever I had at them. When I ran out of bullets, I threw rocks," he said.

Sanders insisted he was just busy doing his job, but his fellow Soldiers and superiors saw something more heroic in the specialist's actions that day. And now he has a Silver Star to explain. On the day he and other division Soldiers had their medals pinned to their desert uniforms, crowds and reporters swarmed many of the medal winners. Sanders stood quietly beside his tank nearby and avoided the publicity. He said it made him feel out of place.

"I don't feel special. I just did what had to be done," he said.

Dollar falls, COLA rises

By Arthur McQueen
U.S. Army Europe Public Affairs Office

With the dollar falling faster than a paratrooper who has already counted to five, Soldiers and civilians may feel their quality of life is in free-fall lately. But the Army has reserve parachutes at hand to smooth the stormy currency markets for those serving abroad: Cost of Living Allowance for Soldiers and Post Allowance for civilian employees.

COLA is based on the difference between overseas living costs and comparable costs at Fort Riley, Kan., the representative location in the United States. "It's designed to partially compensate Soldiers living in overseas areas," said Lt. Col. Stan Brown, 266th Finance Command deputy commander.

The equivalent civilian mechanism, called Post Allowance, "provides a way of recognizing the differences in costs of consumed items," said Joyce McNeil, a regional team leader with the State Department's Office of Allowances. The State Department sets rates of post allowance by comparing local costs to those in Washington, D.C.

In the most recent change, dated Nov. 28, the rate for Post Allowance for most locations in Germany was raised from 25 percent to 30 percent. COLA rates have risen as well. "COLA is evaluated on a daily basis and can change with the exchange rate on any given payday. It has changed nine times since January," said Brown.

For instance, the most recent COLA changes, dated Nov. 1, raised the rate for a sergeant with two dependents and 10 years of service from \$600 to \$785. A sergeant first class with two dependents and 18 years of service received \$890 rather than \$680, and a major with two dependents and 13 years of service received \$1,130 instead of \$860.

"Change in the Euro rate is only one component of COLA. There is a lag time, usually six weeks, but it works both ways," said Brown.

"In foreign locations our analysts take into account where you go to eat, what stores you use to buy items from a list of over 600 items in every location. Prices are gathered every two years," McNeil said.

Civilian pay tables can be found at www.state.gov/m/a/als/. COLA rates can be found at <https://secureapp2.hqda.pentagon.mil/perdiem/allowcol.html>.

Holiday bash



Photo by Karl Weisel

Soldiers and family members enjoy the holiday reception hosted by Hessen Minister President Roland Koch at Wiesbaden's Schloss Biebrich Dec. 3.

Continued from page 1

American youngsters were given goodie bags.

"I want to thank you for sharing your homes with us everyday," said Maj. Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, 1st Armored Division commander, alluding to the support of American families provided by the state of Hessen while thousands of Soldiers deployed for Operation Iraqi Freedom. "Especially last year when times were tough, the people of Hessen came to our aid."

"Please be assured that we are not just your fellow Soldiers, but we are friends to be relied on," said German Maj. Gen. Bernd Diepenhorst from WBK 2 in Mainz, representing the German forces.

"I think it's nice," said Sgt. 1st Class Ramonica Robinson of the 4th Brigade Equal Opportunity Office on Hanau's Fliegerhorst Kaserne.

"It's always good to share an activity with your host nation," said Darmstadt's

Sgt. 1st Class Thomas Mitchem of the 233rd Base Support Battalion. "This gives our kids an opportunity to have an experience with their host nation. It's great having the Germans ask us to be their guests — welcoming us with open arms."

"I think this symbolizes what Christmas time is all about," said Wiesbaden's Capt. Eric Strong, 1st Armored Division. "This is a great opportunity ... a show of support from the state of Hessen."

Strong, who served with the division's 3rd Brigade from Fort Riley, Kan., in Iraq, and now works as the 1st AD commander's aide, said while duty in Iraq was rewarding for Soldiers, "it's wonderful to have Christmas with your wife and family."

American Consul General Peter Bodde expressed his gratitude for the show of solidarity from Hessen officials. "I want to give a personal thanks for all you and your government do for our troops and their families here. ... Merry Christmas everyone."

221st BSB – Wiesbaden, Wackernheim, Dexheim

Club supports charities

By Cassandra Kardeke
*221st Base Support Battalion
Public Affairs Office*

Hundreds of people will get just a little bit more this Christmas, and then some, thanks to the German American Women's Club of Wiesbaden.

More than €7,000 donated to the Wiesbaden military community will help support the Salvation Army, Fisher House, Model United Nations program at Gen. H.H. Arnold High School, Family Advocacy, Exceptional Family Member Program and most importantly for this time of year, the 221st Base Support Battalion Holiday Assistance Program.

"Without donations such as this we could not offer the assistance that many Soldiers and their families need this time of year," said Lt. Col. Christopher Franks, 221st BSB

commander.

Held each year the Holiday Assistance Program depends on donations from within the community to help provide food to low-income families during the holidays. The program received €1,750 from the club during a presentation Dec. 9.

"Through our annual spring flea market and other fundraising activities, the club supports selected local German and American charity organizations and service programs," said Linda Hall, publicity spokesperson for the German American Women's Club.

This year a combined total of €20,000 was donated to both the military and German communities including local shelters for women and children, youth programs, local hospices and an Alzheimer foundation.

Open to women of any nationality, the club promotes friendship, tolerance and mutual understanding among all nationalities.

"Our club is not just German and American women from the local military community. We represent many nationalities and backgrounds," said Hall. Germany, the United States, Australia, Canada, England, Columbia and Japan are just a few of the nationalities represented within the club.

Within the club there are several special interest groups such as hiking, language conversation, cooking and children's play groups. The club meets monthly for coffees or luncheons and sponsors half-day trips to local places of interest.

For more information or to join the club check out their website at www.gawcwiesbaden.de or send email to infor@gawcwiesbaden.de.



A donation of €1,750 by the German-American Women's Club of Wiesbaden will help provide commissary vouchers for more than 180 families in the 221st Base Support Battalion this holiday season. The organization donated €20,000 earlier this month to several military and German charities. To find out more about the Wiesbaden German-American Women's Club see the story at left.